2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

different pattern. They also went to sleep with a grandmother or some other older member of the family when they were old enough to be excluded from their mother's hut at night, and they shared with their small brothers the grandmother's care and her story-telling round the fire in the evenings. During the day the girls continued as part of their mother's household group, eating with her and the younger children. As little girls they were taught to sit down carefully and to smooth down the cloth which they wore round their waists. They were trained to speak correctly and to know the right forms of address, to greet strangers politely, to avoid touching their father's mats or bed, to eat tidily and with restraint. The emphasis was on exclusiveness for these high-born Ngoni girls, lest, as a result of mixing too freely with everyone, they should forget the teaching given and the behaviour which was expected of them. In contrast to their brothers' rigorous training in the *laweni*, Ngoni girls, as they showed signs of approaching puberty, were guarded and looked after and instructed further in correct behaviour.

When a girl found that she was menstruating for the first time, she told one of her age mates and sent her to tell her *gogo*.[1] The *gogo* told her to stay in the hut during the period and showed her how to wear a cloth between her legs, which she had henceforth to wear always whether menstruating or not. She was told to sleep from now on in a different part of the hut from the smaller children and never to bathe with younger girls. At the end of her first period the girl was escorted to the women's bathing-place by her father's sisters and other female members of her father's family. She was made to wash in the stream and squat in the cold water while doing so. I saw more than one child trying to control her shivering while her relatives watched to see if she would be strong and brave, or weak and cowardly. When she was in the water she was made to face south-east—the quarter which the Ngoni called *kwathu* (our home). After this ceremony the girl's father and mother were informed, and her father informed the head of his *banja* and the head of the village. The news was greeted with rejoicing and made generally public.

From about the age of ten or eleven, the Ngoni girl belonged to an age set distinguished by a separate name. She was no longer included in the group of children, as were her brothers of the same age, but was marked out by belonging to the age set called *inkakazana* or *mabuthu*. After her first menstruation she belonged to the age set called *izintombi* or *anamwali*. From this stage, Ngoni girls were under the close supervision of the older women. The association of a *gogo* or older woman with each house in a Ngoni village meant that the girls of the house were under her special care, particularly after they had passed puberty. There

[1] *gogo* in this context is used for grandmother or for the elderly woman to whose care the girl was assigned.

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR

were clearly defined aims in this care of girls after puberty, including instruction in personal hygiene and in pre-marital sexual relations. A girl's father's sisters and her own mother wanted to be able to say, when marriage negotiations began: *Ngombe zake zidzala*, 'her cattle are full', which was the comment made when girls were examined periodically to see if they were still virgin. To achieve this they constantly said to her: '*Mudzisunge, mudzilet:se*', 'take care of yourself, control yourself'; and the *gogo* explained to the girl how she could protect herself. In one area where I lived, the chief's daughter was examined every week, with her *izidandani* or companions, and the girls who helped in the big house were examined every month. The strict behaviour required of Ngoni girls of good family was expected also of those of the same age who were members of the same household, either appointed to be with them as companions or as servants in the big house.

Looking forward to marriage involved not only preservation of her virginity. An Ngoni girl going to a strange village had to know how to perform women's work in the home, how to do it herself as well as how to direct others, and she had to be carefully trained in that meticulous and exclusive social behaviour required of Ngoni women of good family. She might be going to marry a man who intended to 'marry up', in which case she might be thought in one sense to be 'marrying below her station'. Yet her personal position as a member of her father's clan and family could not be altered by her marriage, and she was well aware that she was conferring something on the man and on the family she married into.

While the boys were learning their roles in later life in the democratic atmosphere of the *laweni* and of the boys' pursuits in the village, the girls in the later stage of their training after puberty were treated more individually, and were not left to find their level in a group of their age mates. The adult women took an active part in telling them how to behave, how to dress and how to cook. The girls of high-ranking families sometimes pounded maize with their age mates, singing as they did so, but more for fun than because their food depended on it. They learned to dress their hair and put on clothes, and to walk and dance in company with other girls, but always with the critical eye of their *gogo* upon them. Their lower-ranking companions could make mistakes and be careless, and walk and dance in an exaggerated fashion. Ngoni girls might never pass certain bounds of decorum, and the standard expected of them was high and exacting. I have heard *manina* of leading clans scold young girls many times for careless behaviour and badly done work.

In this training, as throughout that of the boys, there was a deliberate preparation for leadership. A girl's character and ability were being watched and, while an awareness of her personal dignity and position was being fostered, it was accompanied by requirements of obedience

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

and docility, especially to older women. This last was intended to stand her in good stead when she went to be married in a strange village and would be expected to show subservience to her mother-in-law. At the same time, since the girl belonged to a high-ranking clan, she knew, and so did those who were training her, that she would eventually have to exercise authority and teach others what to do and show them how to do it. She would also be expected to have a mind of her own and to speak out on occasions to her husband and, when she grew older, to rebuke women in her house or in her service if they did anything amiss.

In pre-European days, between the private puberty ritual and her marriage, the Ngoni girl went through another ceremony, the *umsindo*. This was a pre-marriage rite, and was in many instances followed almost immediately by marriage. It was held for girls of high-ranking families, though their companions from their own and other villages shared in the ritual. The ceremony was abandoned after the missionaries came, but many of the songs and the dances were well-known to the leading Ngoni women. I saw many *umsindo* dances in the northern and central kingdoms and collected a number of the songs which were still in use, some sung to solo instruments, such as the *igubu*, and others sung at funerals or at tribal gatherings. Those *umsindo* songs which referred to sexual intercourse and used expressions which were considered obscene, had been sung only at the ceremony itself. The Ngoni made a practice of referring to genital organs and to sexual intercourse in veiled language. As soon as the meaning of the terms became obvious, they were disguised by other allusive terms. The degree of obscenity in the actual words of songs was therefore very difficult to establish, but Ngoni informants were always clear about which could be sung in public and which only on occasions of licence or strictly in private.

The *umsindo* ceremony as a preliminary to marriage fulfilled certain functions. It was a public declaration that the girl for whom it was held had been examined and found to be a virgin, for it was not held for anyone who had been deflowered in earlier love affairs. It emphasized the social rank and the wealth of the girl's father, for only rich and important men could afford to hold *umsindo* for their daughters. It had a strong element of a *rite de passage* in it, for the girls were secluded in a hut during most of the ceremony, they fasted, they were given instruction by older women, and they were finally 'brought out' of the hut and adorned with parts of the beasts slaughtered, and with beads given as presents by friends and relatives. Perhaps the chief significance of the *umsindo* was the fact that it was a ceremony held for the girl in her father's village. It was an assertion of her membership in her own family and village circle, and of her father's status and of his regard for her. There is no doubt that the Ngoni women of high rank had a keen sense of their own importance and position; the *umsindo* ceremony

2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
FR5 Ngoni FR5

emphasized this, and was a reminder of their careful bringing up in their father's village surrounded by their attendant girls and older women.

Many of the *umsindo* songs referred to well-known events in Ngoni history. Others were warnings against jealousy when living in a polygynous household. One of these, said to be a lament of the women about the difficulties of polygynous households, was very popular in the northern kingdom and was used by Ngoni ministers in the churches when speaking against polygamy, even though the actual words of the song seemed to be referring to a historical event.

The boys and girls went through one common ceremony about the age of seven, when their second teeth were coming. The local tribes practised various forms of scarification, including facial tribal markings. The Ngoni never did this in the past and said that they despised it. Their distinctive marking was the piercing of the ear lobes in order to insert a small piece of reed, or a stud, or some beads. Formerly, when captives were taken in war, or when a village was conquered and annexed, the local people, especially the younger men, were forced to have their ears pierced as a condition of service in the regiments. After the Europeans came, the forcible ear-piercing was resisted by the local tribes, but among the Ngoni, especially those of trans-Zambesi clans, it continued to be practised, and I saw it being carried out in several villages. It was done in the dry cold-weather months, usually by one of the senior women of the children's family or house, and included all the children of about the same age who wanted to have their ears pierced. The woman pierced the lobe with a thorn, or a needle if she had one, and threaded some cotton through the hole. A day or so later they put in tiny bits of grass and replaced these with larger and larger bits until the hole was considered the right size.

After this ear-piercing ceremony, the boys' and girls' groups developed on their separate lines until their members became interested in each other as members of the opposite sex. Then, as I said at the beginning of the chapter, the groups of youths and girls were the two most prominent age groups in a village. They paid great attention to their clothes, washed with sweet-smelling leaves, used fats to anoint their hair, and the girls wore bead ornaments in their hair and on neck and wrists. Thus adorned, they spent their leisure time, especially in the cold weather after harvest, visiting other villages, usually in separate groups of youths and girls, except when they went as a team to dance *ngoma* in a neighbouring village.

In the social life of young people in Ngoni villages, the *ngoma* dance played an important part, especially in the northern kingdom. It took place after the harvest and was organized on a 'village team' basis. The boys practised their dance outside the cattle kraal in the evenings, and the girls did their dancing by themselves as a rule. But on the occasion

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

behaviour especially to elders, and to enforce by dramatic and sometimes brutal means a submissive attitude towards authority. That objective, as we have seen, was carried out by the Ngoni throughout their training of their children, from the earliest age upwards. They were half amused and half scandalized at the idea that young people had to be put in a camp in the bush in order to teach them how to behave.

Cultural changes in the assumption of adult roles

It is necessary to look back for a moment to the Ngoni past in order to see how changed external conditions in Nyasaland had altered the sequences and the timing of the process by which youths and young girls were recognized as adults. The stages of arriving at social maturity had been speeded up by cultural changes. In the days of warfare the senior herd-boys, from about twenty years of age, were called up at irregular intervals to form a new regiment. From this time they were known as 'young men' or 'youths', and they fought in the tribal wars for five years. In the off-season, during the rains when raids were not carried out, they were called to clear and cultivate the gardens of the Paramount and chiefs, and to help build houses and fence cattle kraals. At approximately the age of twenty-six to twenty-eight they were ordered to take the head-ring, the form of dressing the hair which formerly marked a married Ngoni man, and they were told they could marry and retire from the army. The older Ngoni declared that young men were not allowed to sleep with girls at all until they joined the army. Even then the relationship had to be initiated by the girl expressing her preference for a lover, and then sex relations were limited to partial intercourse. It was at marriage, after having been given the head-ring, that Ngoni youths were called 'men'. They moved out of the dormitory and built a hut for their wives in the area behind the huts belonging to their father's house. The cattle handed over on their marriage to the bride's family were taken from the herd belonging to that house.

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

885 the songs had veiled allusions to sexual intercourse and sex
533 organs but the majority were songs recalling historical events.
881 Others warned young wives against jealousy and strife in polygamous households, and these again were couched in veiled language, because the Ngoni preferred allusive references to anything touching on sex life.

292 When the girl and her companion emerged from the hut
885 of seclusion, they were fully dressed in a short leather skirt,
301 cut on a circular pattern, and a long leather cloak often trimmed with a fringe of tiny brass bells or small copper beads which were heirlooms belonging to the girl's father's house. The girl who was known as the 'owner of the pre-marriage ceremony' wore strips of meat strung together like
[237] beads hanging over her chest. The fat from the kidneys (always used in Ngoni ritual) was twisted into a necklace, and the skins of cows' tails, flayed and spread out were worn hanging from the waist, one in front and one behind. At the close of the ceremonies the skins and fat used for ornament were burned by a stream and the ashes swept into the water —again a typical Ngoni ritual act.

885 In one sense this ritual was a form of social announcement
556 that the girl was now ready for marriage, and the marriage
593 negotiations and full marriage ceremony followed soon after. It was also a way of emphasizing the father's pride in his daughter, and he showed it by the lavish feasting and beer, by the standard of performance of the dances and songs and by decorating the girl with meat, fat, and skins from the cattle of his house. This was the last act he performed on behalf of his daughter, for the actual marriage ceremony took place at the bridegroom's village. It showed him as a man of substance, because only rich men and leading men could afford the outlay. It also showed the girl as a virtuous woman, for
● [836] the ritual was never performed unless the girl was a virgin, and the senior women had been able, after examining her, to say to her father: 'Her cattle are full.'

177 This ritual was given up about the time the missions began
885

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

584 a strenuous resistance, during which one of them earned the name which stuck to her ever afterwards of 'the biting spider'. Considerations in choosing a mate, both for youths and girls, were not only influenced by the Ngoni desire, especially strong among the senior people, for linking Ngoni clans and families together by marriage. The high proportion of young people, boys especially, who had been to school and were Christian, weighed the scales in favour of an educated Christian wife or husband. As always, however, the factor of personal liking was very strong. Attraction first, and then liking based on further acquaintance, was held as most important by the youths and girls themselves. It was partly the question of the transfer of cattle to seal the marriage contract which inclined the young men to listen to the advice of their elders, for they were dependent on them, at least in the first instance, for providing the cattle.

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836 The other direction in which social control operated in relations between the sexes was in the forms of courtship tolerated and permitted. In pre-European days, and for a long time after the missions came, the age of marriage was, as we have seen, postponed for many years after puberty. In those days there was a recognized and socially accepted pattern of sexual freedom before marriage, which we have already mentioned. A girl could indicate to a young man, who had recently joined a regiment, and had shown in various ways that he was attracted by her, that she was willing to take him as a lover. Often this relationship led eventually to marriage between the two, but it was not always the case. These two slept together from time to time in the dormitory, practising limited intercourse. The fear of being deflowered and still more of being pregnant before marriage acted as a very strong deterrent to the girls not to let the young man, in the Ngoni phrase, 'harm her in any way'. If this occurred the girls knew they would have no pre-marriage rite and no full public wedding ceremony, and this would bring shame not only on them but on their father's family and house.

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3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

The missionaries, and through their influence Ngoni Christian teachers and ministers, tried to put a stop to this form of courtship. It was very difficult to convince Ngoni elders and young people that a practice which had been considered socially correct and was under some measure of social control, was now wrong and must be given up. They saw it as something quite distinct from casual and promiscuous intercourse, which they discouraged and despised. A young Christian teacher, speaking of his own youth, said: 'The Christian rule forbade boys and girls to sleep together at night and to play as our fathers played. We did not keep those rules, and we visited girls at night who wanted us, but we were careful not to harm them.' The Ngoni Christian leaders who were aware of the problems on both sides finally threw their weight into advocating much earlier marriages while supporting the carrying out of the private puberty rituals. As we have seen, marriage became usual at about sixteen for girls and from eighteen upwards for youths. This as a rule, though not invariably, ensured that the girls were virgin at marriage which was a very strict Ngoni requirement. But it brought in its train a number of other difficulties which we shall discuss in the next chapter.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

contributed by the whole nation, were not found among the Ngoni.

Informants are agreed that in the old days young men and women married whom they were told and never attempted to make their own choice against their parents' will. From evidence available this seems to be an oversimplification. It seems likely that individual choice mattered less in those days than it does now, but it cannot have been entirely inoperative. It is said that each regiment of men used to flirt with its corresponding women's regiment, and that marriages sometimes followed. Wiese says that among the aristocratic families a woman had the right to choose her own husband, but that this right was dying out and it was becoming the practice to marry off daughters so as to secure the most marriage cattle and maintain upper-class endogamy.[3] It is true that on the evidence of genealogies there do not seem to have been many marriages between very aristocratic women and the most recently captured men, and that therefore we are justified in assuming a tendency towards upper-class endogamy, but this tendency seems not to have been very strong and indeed there never was a clear-cut upper class but instead a method of ranking families in terms of ethnic origin. My informants never suggested that a man would marry his daughter so as to bring in as many cattle as possible, and it seems unlikely that this was ever a common motive.[4]

A girl was expected to be chaste before she was married. From the procedure adopted by the Zulu and from information from other Ngoni groups, it seems likely that girls were examined at marriage to check that they had not been deflowered. Rattray records this among the Ngoni of Southern Nyasaland,[5] and Read makes a similar statement.[6] My own informants had such faith in the sexual rectitude of the past as contrasted with the promiscuity of the present that it was difficult to establish what they really thought happened. It seems that unmarried people were allowed intercourse *inter crura* and that this was considered not a violation of chastity. The whole question has been obscured by the conflict of values between the South-Eastern Bantu leaders, whose view appeared to have prevailed at the time, and the recent captives from the Cewa and kindred peoples, who believed that a girl would die if she did not copulate at puberty. We shall see the outcome of this conflict when we come to discuss modern marriage.

As might be anticipated in a system in which marriage is a transfer of fertility, a wife was expected to be fertile. If she was barren special procedures were adopted to validate the substance of the marriage. A man could appeal to his wife's relatives for another

[3] Wiese, op. cit. 'Expediçao . . .', p. 473 and 'Geschichte . . .', p. 191.
[4] See below, p. 120.
[5] Rattray, *Some folk-lore stories and songs in Chinyanja, with English translation and notes*, S.P.C.K., 1907, p. 115.
[6] Margaret Read, 'The Moral code of the Ngoni and their former military state', *Africa*, xi (1938), p. 6.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5 ●
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

Girls are not examined to see if they have been deflowered. Many girls have love affairs with young boys before they reach puberty, and at one time children built play-houses, after the manner of the Cewa, where they pretended to be adults playing at cooking and copulation. The Cewa encouraged this among their own children and at puberty Cewa girls, if not already deflowered, had their hymen forcibly ruptured in a prescribed manner. We have seen that the Ngoni formerly expected girls to be chaste before marriage while the Cewa believed that if a girl did not copulate at puberty she would die. It seems nowadays that adults expect that pre-pubescent boys and girls will play together sexually and that, provided this takes place with a certain amount of discretion, nothing is done to stop it. Boys and girls visit each other in dormitories, hoping that their voices will not be recognized by people in neighbouring huts. After puberty young men and women continue to flirt together, individuals varying in the extent to which they copulate. Grown men do not usually sleep with young girls, nor grown women with young boys, and if this does happen and is discovered there is always the suspicion of sorcery. The Ngoni believe, with most of their neighbours, that in order to make many of the anti-social medicines of sorcery effective, a sorcerer must copulate with some partner morally forbidden to him (or her), such as a close relative or a person of greatly disparate age or an animal. With this background of belief, Ngoni say that after puberty young men and women naturally like to frolic together and not with their juniors. Within this framework of tolerated covert activity no particular arrangements are made at puberty, save that if a man is betrothed to a young girl he will be invited formally to come and sleep with her once while she is secluded.

Thus from an early age their future roles as husbands and wives condition the sexual activities of boys and girls. A girl who allows herself to be seduced too easily is regarded as foolish and a man who is for ever chasing unmarried girls when he should be founding a family is regarded as immature. But sexual activity is taken for granted, and the only stipulations are that it should be conducted discreetly so that the older people in the village are not forced to notice it, and that unmarried girls should not bear live children. Knowledge of abortifacients seems to be fairly common and recently contraceptives, issued originally to soldiers in the 1939-45 war, have come into use. Few cases of seduction of unmarried girls come before the courts.

Despite the emphasis on sexual satisfaction rather than on fertility, Ngoni men and women still desire children. This is so for men despite the low incidence of bridewealth payments and the uncertainty about the custody of children. A man's children may decide to live with their mother's people, but they are still his children and he can always follow them from village to village in his old age wherever they decide to settle.

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

583 approval of his father before he offers, and as in the case of Amos and Eve (p. 28), the father may sometimes disapprove. If the man is from another part of the territory or from abroad the parents of
583 the woman, even if they accept the legalization payment, may be
C03 reluctant to allow their grandchildren to go a long way away from
593 them to live among their son-in-law's kin. This consideration applies particularly to strangers in the township who marry Ngoni women. When they leave their jobs or retire they try to take their wives and children with them. They may be frustrated in the removal of their children by the woman's parents, who refuse the bridewealth. The courts support the claims of Ngoni grandparents for the retention of their grandchildren under these conditions and a returning Yao or Cipeta man may be forced to travel without his children and sometimes without his wife. I have recorded elsewhere[1] an incident in which a Yao man who had been married to an Ngoni woman for twenty-one years was divorced by her and his offer of bridewealth refused by her parents. The police who check the movements of women and children by bus and lorry away from Fort Jameson are in touch with the Native Courts and may be on the look out if it seems likely that a man from a strange tribe will attempt to smuggle his wife and children away from their Ngoni kin.

581 Thus we see that the kinsfolk are directly concerned with marriage. When the children are still toddlers, they are paired off in fun by their
[858] adult relatives as they sit playing. For a week or month or even longer a woman will laughingly call her neighbour *child's parent-in-law* because their children have been nominated *husband* and *wife* in this way. As a child grows older, so the interest of its relatives in its marriage become clearer. Before marriage the relatives of a
684 girl hold rights in her that are violated if she is seduced and bears
848 a child. It is to them that the girl's lover pays the beast of seduction to recompense them for the wrong he has done by impregnating the girl, but he does not gain custody of the child. On the other hand,
836 no one brings a case against a man merely because he sleeps with an unmarried girl. It is only when she becomes pregnant that an action can be laid against him. A man caught *in flagrante delicto* by one of the unmarried girl's kin can expect abuse and possibly blows but unless he is provocative he need not fear action in the courts. The hostility directed towards him seems to be due in part to his having behaved so indiscreetly as to be caught and having forced the girl's kin to take cognizance of what was happening.

At marriage the woman's kin grant rights in her sexual activities
581 to her husband. These rights are unambiguously transferred by the
583 legalization payment, and the woman's kin are therefore in a position to delay or facilitate the tranfser of these rights by their attitude towards the payment. There is no corresponding right in an unmarried man held by his kin, and at marriage there is no corres-

[1] Barnes, op. cit. p. 238

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

of maternal ties, the cleavage between sets of father's children is an expression more of their different matrilateral affiliations than of the different status of their mothers. A child will be sent to its own mother's mother rather than to its father's wife's mother, although some children do go to the latter. Samuel's children by his first and third wives [1] were reared by their father's fourth wife's mother, but they maintain contact with their own mothers' relatives.

These particular structural changes have taken place without any great conflict of values. It would appear that although polygyny was an essential feature of the old system, there was no idea that it was wrong to remain monogamous. Indeed in any community with a normal sex ratio, the majority of men must be monogamists and it is not surprising that monogamy is tolerated however much polygyny is the goal of ambitious men. Among the Ngoni the decline in polygyny over the last fifty years has not outraged traditional values. In like manner, we have seen that traditionally a man's mother and his wife's mother should share the rearing of his children. This division is in accord with the statement made frequently by aristocratic Ngoni that when distributing gifts a man ought not to favour his own parents more than his wife's. Both these injunctions indicate that even in 'the time of peace', however clearly a man's children by a wife for whom he had paid bridewealth belonged to his group and not to hers, the claims of a wife's kinsfolk and their interest in the children of the marriage were recognized. Ngoni say that children ought to live in their father's village, but this is a statement of the same order as the oft-reiterated remark that the Ngoni pay bridewealth. Ngoni make these statements because these are part of the index of their tribal identity, not because they have observed them to be true. The facility with which married couples live uxorilocally is no doubt partly due to the influence of the matrilineal uxorilocal Cewa and other tribes, but we cannot regard this as the only operative factor.

4. The moral significance of sexual activity

In the treatment of sexual activity in girls there does appear to be a certain moral dilemma. We have observed that the Cewa believed that a girl who did not copulate at puberty would die, and that the Ngoni held that a girl should be chaste until she was married, which was some time after puberty. The seclusion of girls was, and is, a matter arranged by women and one in which men have very little say. It may be on this account that the Cewa view has largely prevailed, for the Ngoni took many women captives and in the early stages of the migration from Natal there seem to have been more Ngoni men than women. The women were not so carefully indoctrinated into the Ngoni way of life as were men captives, for the women's regimental system was never as highly

[1] See above, p. 109

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni
Maravi FR4

developed as the men's. It is to be expected, therefore, that there would be greater Cewa and Nsenga influence in those affairs controlled by women than in political and military matters, which were organized by men. This is borne out by linguistic evidence, for while many of the words, but not all, pertaining to affairs of state are of Ngoni origin, the words now used in the seclusion of girls are drawn from Cewa and Nsenga.

We find therefore that it is the bearing of children before marriage and to a lesser extent pre-marital impregnation which are disapproved of rather than pre-marital copulation. The real contrast in attitude is between pre-marital copulation and adultery. We have seen that in the old days adulterers were killed by order of the chief. The punishment of adultery was a process involving headmen, lieutenants and other important men. The abhorrence of adultery remains despite its great frequency and the prohibition on killing adulterers. An adulterer is a thief, stealing the rights of another man and endangering his marriage. Even when the wife of a labour migrant bears a child and it is in danger of *mdulo* until it can be 'taken up' (p. 87) she cannot openly call in a man with whom to perform this rite. She must either get a man to come in secret or obtain expensive medicines which remove the danger. In like manner, if her husband is impotent, there must be no public recognition of any extra-marital intercourse, for impotence is shameful and not to be admitted and cannot justify the intervention of another man. It is thought regrettable that a woman should grow old without bearing daughters to help her pound maize and sons to clothe her in her old age. Yet when medicines have been of no avail and her husband calls in a seed-raiser he must come in secret and later be rewarded covertly. Similarly the sexual activities of children must be conducted discreetly. Here, however, a much more tolerant attitude is taken and there is not the same need for secrecy. There is no chaperoning of unmarried girls but only of married women whose husbands are away. There is no inspection of girls at marriage, and one informant said that if after puberty a girl has no lover with whom she can sleep, her grandmother will call in a young man to copulate with the girl in the grandmother's house to see if she is proficient, and that for this he would be rewarded by the grandmother. From one point of view we may say that there is pre-marital freedom, with discretion, and marital restriction of sexual activity. Pre-marital intercourse does, however, have a moral connotation, and it is held that the girl who sleeps too easily with all comers before marriage will continue thus after she is married. The need for discretion in premarital affairs is in some part due to the activities of the missions, working at the village level through deacons, elders and women helpers. Yet in general no action is taken by the local Christian group in the village unless the pre-marital sexual activities of its members are conducted in such a way that it is no longer possible to ignore them.

Sexual intercourse is the critical activity of marriage. Within

4: Barnes E-5 (1946-1949)1951 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Mpezeni

varying success in their other aims. The number of people with dozens of wives has decreased to zero, but this has been due to the operation of other factors as well as pressure from the missions. Whether the incidence of polygyny as a whole, that is the ratio of monogamist to polygynist men, has decreased is difficult to assess, since genealogical information is incomplete on barren wives and the wives of men whose descendants are now scattered. The fact that only six per cent of widows are inherited is due to the general change in the nature of marriage, the decline in the incidence of bridewealth, and the changed significance of residence, as well as to Christian endeavour. In these matters the general flow of events has been on the side of the missions. The same cannot be said for premarital copulation and for the ritual of 'taking up the child'. Censure from the mission is an additional hazard to be avoided in premarital intercourse, but it has not prevented it. In their opposition to the belief in *mdulo* and the ritual intercourse which follows as a consequence of the belief, the missions are aided by the teaching of hygiene and Western science in the schools, but there is no support from indigenous values. In this matter it is difficult to establish any trend, but the way in which attitudes are changing towards traditional mystical sanctions seems to be that the operation of the sanction is still believed in, but that the techniques for counteracting the sanction have been added to, so that the powerful medicines of Western civilization, particularly the sulphonamides, can be used to counteract the machinations of sorcerers. It does not seem likely that the belief in *mdulo* will disappear easily.

Thus in the system of values sustaining marriage, we find that there is some inconsistency. The teaching of the missions, the values associated with the old Ngoni way of life, and those deriving from the matrilineal tribes of the region conflict with one another on some points and support each other at others. The situations of the present day provide for considerable freedom of choice within these conflicting traditions, so that in one situation a man may adhere to the mission teaching in condemning the bigamy of another man in his village, and in another situation take part in the marriage negotiations for an additional wife for his chief, in accordance with the old Ngoni system of values. A man condones the secret lovers of his unmarried daughter, but when she becomes pregnant brings them to court with the approval of the mission.

6. *The transfer of rights*

The rights transferred from one group to the other by marriage payments in the old system were clearly defined. By the payment of 'snuff-box' the man's patrilineal kin group acquired rights *in uxorem* in the woman, and by the bridewealth they acquired rights *in genetricem*.[4] If the woman committed adultery after 'snuff-box'

[4] I have taken these terms from the interesting paper by Mrs. Bohannan on 'Dahomean marriage: a revaluation', *Africa*, xix (1949), p. 278 to indicate rights in a woman as wife and as mother respectively.

7: Hodgson G-5 (1926) 1933 FR5 Ngoni FR5
Maravi FR4

12. *Customary Licence* (*Ngoni*).

N 836 [183] [684] [583] Pre-marital intercourse was strictly forbidden, but it is now the general practice, though disapproved of by the elders. While rarely claimed, it is still possible for a father to obtain damages from a man who is proved to have had connexion with his young unmarried daughter; and the bride-price is reduced when it is known that a girl has been playing fast and loose as a regular habit.

13. *Dissolution of Marriage* (*Ngoni*).

N 586 [595] Connubial disputes are decided at the husband's village. A wife may not be divorced on account of barrenness; but in such a case her father gives the husband a younger sister without further *mabeka*, or arranges with a friend or relation to give his daughter in return for a smaller bride-price.

When a divorce has been granted, it is made effective by the husband's *nakhoswe* taking the wife home and handing her back to her father. If there are no children, the bride-price is returned, together with the *mcheka*, *kutenders* and other presents made before marriage. Presents made by husband to wife after marriage are considered to be the woman's own property, and she takes them with her. If there are several children, the husband keeps them, and his father-in-law retains the bride-price. If there is only one child, and the bride-price was large, the husband keeps the child and also receives back a portion of the bride-price, the guiding principle being a fair division. When the father is absent and is entitled to the children, his relations take charge of them. M [586] But even though the father may be given legal ownership, neither Angoni nor Achewa ever take small children away from their mother, with whom they must remain "until they are able to understand," the father being allowed meanwhile to visit them from time to time.

III.—Domestic Life: Filial.

1. *Infancy.*

M 845 Among the Achewa, twins were never killed. After being washed in medicine, they were taken with a present of a goat to the chief, who thereupon gave them their names. Until that was done, the chief could not visit their village. At night one twin sleeps on each side of the mother, who lies on her back. If one of them dies young, it is buried with a fruit of the "sausage tree" (*kigelia pinnata*), so that it may not be lonely. Formerly, twin girls married the same man [582] at the same time, and twin brothers married their first wives at the same time.

M 429 Guardianship of a child is always vested in the father until initiation, when it passes to the *mtsibweni*, and on his death to the mother's other brothers, and then to the mother's sons.

N 429 593 Among the Angoni, the father is always guardian, with the modification that after marriage a girl must obey her husband before all others. When the father is dead, the father's brothers succeed according to age, then the father's sons in order, and then the sons of the father's brothers in their order.